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Diploma Thesis

Crowdsourcing — A New Method for the Creation of Innovation in Small and Medium Sized

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The ability to create innovations is crucial for survival in highly competitive markets such as the hotel industry. Especially for small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) it is a key success factor to continuously offer innovative services in order to prevail over leading hotel concerns. However, due to their size, SMEs are confronted with certain weaknesses that inhibit the creation of innovations such as deficiencies in time, finances, know-how and qualified personnel.

Recent technological developments and the shift to active consumerism brought about a new concept termed Crowdsourcing. Crowdsourcing describes the act of outsourcing certain operational or creative tasks usually performed by the company itself to an undefined crowd outside the company over the internet and thus gaining external resources to collectively produce innovative goods and services. The purpose of the thesis is to investigate to what extent Crowdsourcing can contribute to the creation of innovations in small and medium sized hotels. Based on existing literature, an understanding of the term 'innovation' in the hotel industry as well as the challenges of the creation of innovation in SMEs is elaborated. Furthermore, the concept Crowdsourcing is examined in detail, as are possible Crowdsourcing-tools for creating innovation. In order to shed light on the efficiency of Crowdsourcing in the innovation process, empirical research is conducted within a qualitative-descriptive case analysis in which three Crowdsourcing-tools are practically applied at the Harzer Hof, a small hotel in Scharzfeld, Germany. The applied instruments comprise an external suggestion system, an idea contest as well as the inclusion of a virtual community for the creation of innovation.

The results show that the implementation of each tool is quite feasible and useful considering that integration and utilization of the tools examined is easy, user-friendly and require few temporal and financial resources. Moreover, especially the idea contest, which brought about nine potential innovations for the present case, and partly also the interacting virtual community redound to an enhancement of the innovation capacity by increasing knowledge and augmenting job performance. Consequently, depending on the applied tool, Crowdsourcing does contribute to the creation of innovations in small and medium sized hotels by expanding innovation capacity in a time- and cost-friendly manner through external knowledge and manpower.

Case study: www.hotel-harzerhof.de

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My credo: "It all happens at the sharp end of the business- the moment of truth!"

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